

Condo conversion bill goes to Annapolis

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Would extend protections to developmentally disabled

by Warren Parish

Staff Writer

A bill that would extend rental protections to developmentally disabled tenants living in condominium conversion buildings is making its way through the state legislature.

Driven by complaints from renters in the recently converted Pavilion high-rise apartment building, renamed the Monterey, the legislation is designed to update outdated state law, said the bill's sponsor, Sen. Brian E. Frosh (D-Dist. 16) of Bethesda.

State law allows county's to declare a rental emergency and requires developers to continue renting up to 20 percent of a building's units for another three years if residents are at least 62 years old or are physically disabled.

But the law does not allow for residents who are developmentally disabled.

"It was written before the Americans With Disabilities Act and the Fair Housing Act," Frosh said.

The new legislation would broaden the state definition of disabled, adding cognitive impairments to the category that now accounts only for the physically handicapped.

In July, the Montgomery County Council a three-year rental extension to include both physical and mental disabilities



Frosh



Gazette file photo

The Pavilion's Montrose Road location will make it hard for renters who cannot afford to buy a condo to find a place situated close to a Metro station with Rockville's amenities, renters say.

that substantially limit at least one major life activity. But developmentally disabled renters were left out due to restrictive language in the state law.

"We went as far as we could in so far as expanding the definition," County Councilman Howard A. Denis (R-Dist. 1) of Chevy

Chase said.

County law already provides lifetime rental extensions to senior or physically handicapped individuals who meet income requirements and have lived in their apartment at least 12 months before a conversion notification.

The Pavilion's Montrose Road location will make it hard for renters who cannot afford to buy a condo to find a place situated close to a Metro station with Rockville's amenities, renters say.

Ellen Meyerson, whose daughter is part of a developmentally disabled community living in the Pavilion, has been lobbying for Frosh's bill.

"I hope there's enough support out there," she said. "Our delegation seems to be positive. But we've got to make people aware outside of Montgomery County that this is not a Montgomery issue. People should have at least three years to find affordable housing. The developmentally disabled have a harder time doing that and are more vulnerable."

The new legislation may go from the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to the Senate floor by next week, Frosh said.

A similar bill has been introduced in the House.

But the legislative change is likely to come too late for Pavilion renters.

"It would be nice to provide some protection to the folks at the Pavilion, but that process is already in motion," Frosh said.

Triton Pavilion Limited Liability began converting the Pavilion after purchasing the 432-unit building for \$117 million in November. Officials from Triton, a subsidiary of Triton Property Group out of Annapolis, have said they will comply with condo conversion laws. Renovated high-end condos are scheduled to be available by the middle of the year.